



European Forum for Freedom in Education
Europäisches Forum für Freiheit im Bildungswesen

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Dear *effe* members,

This newsletter comes at a busy and exciting time for *effe*. The EU office in Brussels has expanded following a successful funding application and *effe* Austria, with support from *effe* international has just hosted a Colloquium entitled “Education Spring” in Vienna. You’ll find a report on the Colloquium along with other events in Brussels inside.

We hope you have fun reading and best wishes from Brussels!

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European Youth Forum Conference on 'Quality Assurance of Lifelong Learning', 19th April 2011

An expert conference on 'Quality Assurance of Lifelong Learning'¹, organised by the 'European Youth Forum' (YFJ), took place on the 19th April 2011 in Brussels. A large number of NGOs active in the field of



education, quality assurance experts and numerous member youth organisations of the 'European Youth Forum' participated in the conference. The main objective of the event was to give different actors in the field of LLL the opportunity to share their experiences with regards to QA and to examine how these experiences could contribute towards a universal approach to QA in LLL for educational NGOs and youth organisations.

The Policy and Advocacy Coordinator of the YFJ, Maarten Coertjens, opened the conference and presented a YFJ Pilot Project on Quality Assurance of Non-formal education (NFE). He underlined the importance of recognising Non-formal education, without going too far in the definition of QA standards. Generally, in his opinion, QA has to make sure that education stakeholders take into consideration the learning needs of individuals and society. The subsequent panel discussion focused on academic approaches to, and research on QA.

Daniela Ulicna, QA expert from 'GHK Consulting', explained how the diversity of youth organisations makes finding a definition for a general approach to QA challenging. "Quality has to grow from the inside", she said, "and every situation is different". She also emphasised that quality assurance inspires trust, as external experts check the cost-value-ratio. Dr Lihong Huang from the 'Norwegian Social Research' stressed the fact that "quality" as a concept in education has only become a main concern since the 1990s, whereas before it was much more a matter of quantity and simply of access to education. She made a claim for a combination of the 'Human Rights Approach' and the 'Social Justice Approach' to education and argued against the 'Human Capital Approach'.

According to her, QA should not primarily seek to turn education into an economic resource at the disposal of employers, but to take into consideration the needs of learners and of social justice.



Maarten Coertjens, Policy and Advocacy Coordinator, European Youth Forum

The next panel discussion dealt with the issue of quality and the construction of a LLL society; it was chaired by Dr. Ulrike Hanemann from the Institute for Lifelong Learning of the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organisation). Anne Liekenbrock, Director of *effe*'s EU office in Brussels, had been invited to take part in the discussion and



Anne Liekenbrock (centre), Director of *effe*, participating in a Panel Discussion on Quality Assurance in Non-formal education

she emphasised that the exclusive accumulation of knowledge does not meet today's learners' needs and that knowledge is insufficient without the acquirement of methodical and reflective abilities. She continued to say that children have to be involved in what they do and should not simply see school as a task. Bert Vandenkendelaere from the 'European Students' Union' pointed out that most of the time people see LLL as an issue exclusively for adult education, whereas in fact Non-formal education and Informal learning are equally important for children and students. Pieter-Jan Van der Velde, Quality Assurance Expert from the 'Flemish University Council', added that one of his institution's priorities is indeed the recognition of prior learning acquired by non- and informal means and that present day university rankings are problematic, insofar as they focus on research achievements instead of learning success and individual student development.

Furthermore, the speakers, among them Arancha Oviedo, Quality Assurance Policy Officer at EQA-VET² (European Quality

Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training), stressed the fact that not only the learners' output is relevant, but that the recordable learning results have to be compared to the initial standard – that is to say the initial level of every individual learner.

In the concluding plenary session, the speakers suggested a "road map" for Quality Assurance in LLL. Fiorella Perotto, Head of the Unit for Lifelong Learning at the European Commission, outlined the educational dimension of the 'Europe 2020 Strategy' as a response to the economic crisis affecting Europe since 2008. She emphasised the Commission's efforts to make national educational frameworks compatible with one another and to increase Europe-wide mobility of pupils, students and teachers. Ms. Perotto mentioned other means of assuring the



Plenary Session - left to right: Hanjo Schild, Director, Partnership on Youth; Dr. Ulrike Hanemann, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning; Ms. Fiorella Perotto, Head of Unit Lifelong Learning, European Commission; Dr. Giuseppe Porcaro, Secretary-General, European Youth Forum

quality of European education such as the Europass CV and the 'Agenda for New Skills and Jobs'³. Dr. Ulrike Hanemann urged actors in the field of education to reconsider their exclusively output-oriented thinking and to adapt the criteria of measurement to today's learners' needs. Hanjo Schild,

Director of 'Partnership on Youth'⁴, doubts the effectiveness of what he sees as the current tendency to over-test student performances and stressed the need for holistic learning in formal, non-formal and informal education. Finally Giuseppe Porcaro, Secretary-General of the 'European Youth Forum', agreed that non-formal education has to be learner-oriented but also maintained that its social impact has nevertheless to be monitored.

effe appreciates the initiative of the 'European Youth Forum' concerning Quality Assurance of Lifelong Learning and is convinced that the different organisations active in the field of education should make this issue a priority. The invitation to the expert conference

organised by the YFJ gave *effe* the opportunity to present its point of view on the increasingly important issue of Quality Assurance and to exert influence on the ongoing opinion-making process. Quality Assurance can certainly now be considered an established and legitimate topic on the agenda of educational discussions. *effe* wishes to stress however that quality assurance should not be misinterpreted as being the standardisation and levelling of the multiple, existing forms of education.

¹ See: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc1134_en.htm

² See: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc2091_en.htm

³ See: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=958>

⁴ See: http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/index.html?_locale=de

EESC Public Hearing on 'Societal Empowerment and Integration of Roma citizens in Europe', 28th April 2011

A Public Hearing on 'Societal Empowerment and Integration of Roma citizens in Europe' took place at the headquarters of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in Brussels on 28th April 2011. The hearing dealt with the possibilities of improving social integration and involvement of Europe's Roma citizens. As the representative institution of European social interest groups, the EESC hoped to further highlight this socially challenging issue to the other European institutions and the public through this event. Representatives from the European Commission (EC), the Hungarian Presidency of the European Council and various actors from civil society were invited to attend and participate.

Madi Sharma from the EESC chaired the different panels and first gave the floor to

Akos Topolanszky, Hungarian rapporteur on the EESC opinion on the 'Societal empowerment and integration of Roma citizens in Europe'. Mr Topolanszky welcomed the Commission's recently approved 'EU framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020'¹, but expressed concerns on its "lack of ambition". According to the EESC, the situation of Roma has worsened these last years and should be tackled by more important means than those proposed by the Commission in its framework. Most notably, Mr Topolanszky underlined the importance of actively involving Roma citizens and urged the Commission not to support policies which could potentially discourage or limit active citizenship.

Ms Dana Trama-Zada, Member of the Cabinet of Viviane Reding, the

Commissioner responsible for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, reminded the public of the EC's past actions, above all the firm stance taken by Ms Reding on the expulsion of Roma citizens from France in summer 2010. She outlined the funding opportunities offered by the new framework and defined four main fields for the Commission's action: education, employment, housing and health care. A higher risk of social marginalisation and the non-sedentary lifestyle of some Roma mean that Roma people often face particular difficulties in accessing services in the above-mentioned fields. Ms Trama-Zada emphasised the fact that the Commission's commitment to the Roma issue cannot be used as a pretext by member states to reduce their efforts. The Commission expects national strategies for Roma integration to have been delivered to them by December 2011.

The representative of the Hungarian presidency, Ms Melinda Horvath, said that the current presidency is preparing a report on the Roma issue, with particular emphasis on measures against the recurrent problem of early school-leaving. She welcomed the Commission's framework and agreed that priority should be given to the above-mentioned four main action fields.

During the following debate, representatives from Roma civil society associations urged the Commission to tackle the existing problems 'on the ground' and not just on paper. They encouraged the Commission to focus on the countries where Roma integration problems are most prevalent. Ivan Ivanov from the 'European Roma Information Office' asked the Commission to prevent school authorities in countries such as Romania and Bulgaria from systematically sending Roma children to segregated

schools. A representative from the French association '*La Voix des Roms*' questioned the Commission's overall perspective on the Roma issue and stressed that the problem does not only consist of social and economic exclusion; there are, according to him, also far-reaching mechanisms that exist in European society which allow for racial, ethnic and cultural discrimination and stigmatisation. Cristi Mihalache from the 'Roma Education Fund' shared Mr Topolanszky's views on the need to involve Roma citizens and underlined that this is vital for the sustainability of the efforts made and the ultimate improvement of the Roma's situation.

Ms Trama-Zada replied that the Commission recognises the cultural specificity of the Roma, but that surveys showed that the biggest needs are located on a social policy level. She underlined the Commission's rejection of any school segregation policy towards Roma and made clear, with reference to France, that freedom of movement in the EU will be strictly enforced in future for all citizens.

Mr Topolanszky shared Ms Trama-Zada's view concerning the priority of social action and stated that the Roma do not need new rights, but that the existing ones be enforced for them. Mr Pariza, a Spanish member of the EESC, expressed deep concern on the resurgence of racism and xenophobia in Europe, not only directed against the Roma. He urged the European institutions to take the lead in opposing these trends.

In the second panel discussion, Hungarian, Romanian and Belgian representatives from civil society had the opportunity to give an overview of their activities. They all provide help to the Roma on the ground. The Hungarian and Romanian associations are mainly active in the field of education,

aiming at obtaining higher rates of school attendance amongst Roma, whereas the Belgian NGO, the '*Centre de Mediation des Gens du Voyage à Namur*', helps Roma citizens in Belgium to access housing and health care services. A common feature is the high level of commitment amongst the NGOs in their attempts to involve Roma citizens and help them to become more active within society.

effe welcomes the holding of public hearings such as these and, given the evolving nature of the Roma's situation, believes that discussions on this issue must be intensified in future. Access to basic public services such as education and

health care must be improved for the Roma people while ensuring that they are able to sustain their unique way of life. Their ethnic and cultural identity should be respected and measures against their stigmatisation and discrimination taken in order to close the gap separating the Roma from the rest of society. *effe* believes that education is the key factor to achieve this aim. Through school attendance and language teaching, education can help to integrate pupils, creating a mutual understanding of each others' culture and origins without the aim of disregarding cultural individuality.

¹ See: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=1011&furtherNews=yes>

***effe* Colloquium 'Education Spring', 28th-30th April 2011, Vienna**

A colloquium entitled 'Education Spring' was organised by *effe* Austria in Vienna from 28th-30th April 2011. *effe* international supported the organisers of the colloquium and towards the end of the event offered international insights on the educational matters discussed. The focus of the conference was 'Quality in

education and included presentations and panel discussions. Issues such as democratic education and the transition from school training to vocational training were also dealt with here.

Within the **Symposium**, there were various working groups composed of experts in the field of education and other registered visitors. The aim was to draw up concrete perspectives on the future and quality of education. On the first day of the colloquium participants focused on quality in education today, whereas on the second day, particular emphasis was put on quality in the future of education. The Forum and the Symposium were organised so that both programmes overlapped and participants from both gathered together at the end of the second day for a joint-panel discussion.



education' and offered participants three main choices of activity: the Forum, the Symposium and the 'Experience World'.

The **Forum** provided participants with background information regarding quality

The discussions on the quality and future of education were marked by the concerns of many of those present that the opportunities for pupils and parents to

participate and have a say in education could be compromised and that the current trends of standardisation could go on to become a concrete, state-sponsored



The 'Fishbowl' discussion at the Forum on 'Education today'

reality. Some emphasised the risk of social exclusion that such trends could induce; children from poorly-educated or migration backgrounds could fall behind in the schools of the future. They presented a vision of a pluralistic education system which is open to all as a possible alternative to this.

The **'Experience World'** was dedicated to alternative education initiatives from all over Austria. Groups had the opportunity to demonstrate their day-to-day work to visitors. Pupils staged juggling and theatre performances, sang, danced, gave lectures and painted. Through these activities they wished to show what young people are capable of doing if they are involved in the shaping of their activities and given full freedom to realise their wishes. An 'International Day of Education' was the theme for Saturday, the last day of the colloquium, and gave the actors from the field of education present the opportunity to share their experiences and network. In the framework of a round table discussion on education and the European Union visitors had the opportunity to learn and ask questions. Another issue was the

building of relations between pupils, teachers and parents. They stressed the importance of developing a stable and trusting relationship between all those involved in school life as well as the stability of existing social relations. In the final discussion, there were calls for diversity in education so that all pupils, regardless of their social origin and ability, are able to find a suitable place in the education system. There were also calls for equal opportunity for learners with regards to education and that education should be adapted to the learner's individual needs and abilities. Only by this means, it was argued, can we ensure that future education will be of high quality and will promote critical thinking and personal development amongst pupils.



Students at the 'Experience World' during a theatre performance

All in all, the *effe* Colloquium proved very popular amongst the general public. Many students, parents, teachers, employees of the City of Vienna and those interested in education visited the event and actively took part in the discussions. The general programme which included entertaining visitors with informal education discussions and evening dancing event all contributed to the success of a successful 'Education Spring'.

(Information on our November Colloquium taking place in Münster, Germany, will follow in subsequent Newsletters.)

EUCIS-LLL Conference on Volunteering, 9th May 2011, Kraków



EUCIS-LLL

The conference seeks to deal with issues such as the role of volunteering in

EUCIS-LLL's Annual Conference on 'the role, place and value given to volunteering in education and training' is currently taking place in Kraków, Poland (9th May 2011).

developing personal skills and competencies, the recognition and validation of these skills and the added social and civic dimension to volunteering. Anne Liekenbrock, Director of *effe*, is leading a Workshop on the 'Transnational dimension of volunteering' and a report of the whole conference will follow in our next newsletter.

Anne Liekenbrock elected to EUCIS-LLL Steering Committee

During the above-mentioned conference in Kraków, Anne Liekenbrock, Director of *effe*, was elected for the European Forum for Freedom in Education to the

EUCIS-LLL Steering Committee. *effe* is delighted with this result and is looking forward to working more closely with EUCIS-LLL in the future.

Jean Monnet Funding Application for 2011

effe is delighted to report that it has been successful in its application for financial support for 2011 from the European Commission's Jean Monnet Programme. This is a very positive step for

effe and it opens up new opportunities for the organisation. We hope to build on past successes and work to strengthen *effe*'s voice at a European level as a constructive and active partner in the field of education.

New Intern in *effe* Brussels office

The *effe* office in Brussels has appointed a new intern to support its European work. Philipp Zessin has recently completed his PhD in History and is a

German native speaker. He also speaks fluent English and French. You can contact him via assistant@effe-eu.org with any general questions.

Editorial:

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